

Why we celebrate the Winter Solstice

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Long before the birth of Christ, before Santa, Rudolph, Frosty, the Grinch, Scrooge and the invention of electricity, Pagans celebrated the return of the Sun to our hemisphere on/about December 21st. When the Sun enters 0° Capricorn, Saturn is the planetary governor of Capricorn and 'rules' for a month until January 21st. In this 30 days every religion (as well as Christians) celebrate in a major way (Romans, the Feast of Saturnalia). Solstice - it's the reason for the season!

In recent times (only a few decades ago) a smart advertising executive at Coca Cola Co. created the plump (and he'd now be considered obese) Santa Claus in the red and white suit from the legend of a simple Norseman reindeer shepherd named St. Nicholas (San-Ni-Klaus).

And so it came to pass, in just a few short decades, the centuries old season of feasting, lights, greenery, song, ritual, prayer and the very simple celebrations of eat, drink and be merry during the Holy-days became a retailers dream (and a consumer's nightmare).

The poor have always struggled in winter, long before the commercialism of Christ-mass. Charitable giving is well documented in Charles Dicken's famous novel – A Christmas Carol.

Around two thousand years ago, the Three Kings
(or Three Wise Men or Magi) set out on their camels in search of a star.
I see on CNN there is controversy about what these 3 men should be called.
Why not call them the Three Astrologers, because that's what they were.
Three rich smart guys.

These Three Astrologers traveled in search of a child born on the night of a star – or a "triple conjunction involving the planets Saturn and Jupiter (in Pisces)", a celestial phenomenon more commonly known as the Star of Bethlehem. This planetary conjunction was seen all over the world that night, not just in the Middle East. Now the Vatican says it's OK to believe in aliens (2009) and this great light may have been a visitation of beings from afar.

According to the Bible, the Three Astrologers asked everyone about a child born that sacred evening. In time, they found an infant of lowly birth, radiant with Celestial Light, lying in a manger.

There is a great deal of discussion as to *when* that "great star light" actually took place. Modern astrologers strongly doubt it was Dec. 25...in fact we know it was not December 25th. Now that we can accurately calculate any celestial event thanks to computers, most astrologers identify the day of the Christ birth to be around mid-April.
(public figures commonly celebrate their birthdays on a day other than their actual birthday)

Still we do know this: Christian church fathers knew it would be a very powerful move to reappoint the celebration of the birth of Christ, to the middle of the biggest Pagan Holiday of the year in December at Winter Solstice. They reasoned perhaps, that over time, they could get the attention of the Pagans.
It was a smart political move.

In ancient times, long before the birth of Christ – and even today, all over the world Pagans continue to celebrate the cycles of Nature and the movement of the planets through the sky. We unconsciously celebrate the planets we can see without a telescope when we speak their names each day of the week, Moon-day, Mars-day, Mercury-day, Jupiter-day, Venus-day, Saturn-day and Sun-day. In French we say: Lundi (Luna's day), Mardi (Mars-day), Mercredi (Mercury-day), Jeudi (Jupiter-day) et Vendredi (Venus-day).

Words like *disaster* literally mean – “the stars (astra) are against you (dis)”. The Jewish term for wishing someone good luck: “Mazel Tov” literally means “May you have good planets” (source: *The Jewish Book of Why*).
(No surprise: over the centuries, the Jewish people have produced many good astrologers!)

In the Northern countries, traditional customs to celebrate the Winter Feast-of-all are remarkably the same. The merriment, revelry, good cheer and feast-ivities begin around Nov. 21, every year as the Sun enters Sagittarius.

Observe people in late November...have you noticed that some folks just can't wait until December to put up their colored lights or host that first seasonal party?

That's because Sagittarius is not just governed by the man/horse - it is actually the sign of the *Party Animal*. Also, at the darkest time of year we naturally turn our attention inward. Acts of faith, prayer and giving thanks, making charitable acts and the sharing of good will as well as letting bygones be bygones (forgiveness), these are also a Sagittarian hallmarks...and so is gaining weight from overeating!

The Winter Feast-ival weeks today have become a crazy consumer frenzy at the time of year when Nature is resting. We are all a part of Nature. In our home we prefer to enjoy a more meditative mood by celebrating the return of the Light quietly and instead of shopping, we love to take time to feast with friends. And we sleep – just as Nature is doing.

Some try to escape the Silly Season. Why even try! Partying in December is in all of our genes by now! For centuries, there has always been, and there will always be hearty eating at the onset of winter. *The ancient feast of Saturnalia pre-dates Christ-mass.* Saturn is the planet that governs the sign Capricorn and it's the Sun's entry into Capricorn on Dec. 21st each year that heralds the beginning of this Winter Festival, Saturnalia.

Before the days of electric light, the rich and poor, young and old, slaves, servants, noblemen and kings, all gathered to eat, drink and make merry together during the feast of Saturnalia at the dark of the year. Debts and old grudges were discharged, as the months ahead would be harsh before the next harvest. Many people would die in the months after Solstice if the growing season that year had not been productive for them. It was an act of humanity to share good will, music, drink and food before Death arrived in January, February and March. For many the feast of Saturnalia would be their last.

So Solstice is here! Hail to the Sun! Let's have a compassionate Yule.

We say, forget the stress of crazy consumerism. Chill and get in the groove of Solstice. All religious celebrations at this time of year are rooted in celebrating the Sun's return to the Northern Hemisphere, it is about fellowship and helping the poor and giving to those who don't have much.

It is time to light candles (and colored lights) to encourage the Sun to come back to us in the dark, chilly North. It is time to bring greenery into our homes (a tree with lights and wreathes) as an offering to Mother Nature so She may be encouraged to bring the SUN back to us and our crops will grow again. Before refrigeration, proper food storage and our favorite specialty food shops, the return of the SUN to our hemisphere meant FOOD would grow again, food to feed our livestock, our children and our selves.

Food is life itself.

So as the Sun enters Capricorn on Dec. 21st and for the weeks to follow into early January... it's party time! Make merry with those you love. Let the feast-ivals begin!

The Sun coming back to our hemisphere was and will always be a BIG DEAL no matter which god you pray to. In wintery Canada, we most certainly understand the powerful importance of the Sun returning to the North. We celebrate the Holy-days with gusto and faith that Life will return again when the Sun returns to us. We say Happy Solstice, Merry Christ-Mas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays to one and all!

**We love to celebrate the passing of the Darkest Night of the Year because
Here comes the Sun!**

**Winter Solstice 2011 begins as the Sun enters 0° of Capricorn on Wed., December 21st 10:35 pm PST,
Thursday December 22nd in New York at 1:35 am and London UK at 5:35 am GMT.**

**We wish you Magi-cal Solstice Holy-days!
Solstice – it's the reason for the season!**

Let's celebrate it!

A Hopi Indian speaking to psychologist Carl Jung said, "The Sun is God, anybody can see that!"

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